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THE CONCEPT OF A TRANSCENDENT DEITY

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to examine and elucidate the theological and philosophical uses of the word 'transcendent' in so far as the word is applicable to the concept of deity. The term 'transcendent' in all its many and varied uses appears to have antithetical reference in some way to experience or the empirical order.

In theology the word is used to indicate that which is exalted above and distinct from the universe, and yet in some way has access and power over it. It has been opposed to immanence, though in modern times the deity is regarded as both immanent and transcendent. In philosophy it implies that which is beyond the possible limits of experience, and hence beyond human knowledge, but not, of course, beyond the imagination or beyond thought.

The concepts of pantheism, panentheism and deism are defined and compared with that of Christian theism, in the light of the opposition between transcendence and immanence.

It has been asserted that creation out of nothing is the expression of God's absolute transcendence, and that the sole object of genuine worship is a transcendent God. The transcendence of God is thus linked closely with the creation of the world and man. God is the sole object of worship.

The concept of transcendence is implied by one strand of the concept of holiness, both of which are compatible with the concepts of inscrutability and unknowability. The "distance" of the creature from the Creator is enhanced by various means, all of which seem to demand unconditional

obedience and limitless praise. Worship as adoration and praise is directed to God and not at God and this is compatible with a transcendent God, if He can, in some sense, "hear" the worship expressed, otherwise it would become pointless. But the strand of worship which includes prayer and supplication appears to be different from the strand of worship which the deists offered to their God. It would seem that worship demands that, in some sense, God is able to communicate with His creation, and that His creatures are convinced that they can, under certain appropriate conditions, communicate with Him. Were He unconcerned, as the deists aver, then communication would be impossible.

Various concepts are selected and their compatibility or otherwise with the idea of a transcendent God assessed. Freedom and progress seem to demand an unconcerned God, and the problem of evil is best viewed in that same light. Revelation requires that God is not unconcerned but has a real love for His creation. This is compatible with the concepts of holiness, unknowableness, and hiddenness, all of which are qualities of a transcendent God. Only a hidden God can disclose Himself, while only an unknowable God would wish to give His worshippers knowledge about Himself. Revelation appears to be primarily not a body of teaching but the unveiling of His hiddenness.

In the philosophical field, 'transcendent' is defined as "beyond experience", and this calls into question the meaning of this phrase. If it means literally beyond experience of any sort, then reference to God becomes a mere formality, and the concept of a transcendent God cannot be philosophically justified. But a definition which rules out such a pervasive influence as the worship or the recognition of a transcendent God

by the Christian community, must be too tightly drawn. Persons demand the recognition of a "numinous" type of experience.

It is impossible to obtain empirical knowledge of God. All that can be done is to assert certain postulates and discuss certain propositions. The use of terms like "Being Itself" may indicate impersonality but raises paradoxes involved in the connotations of the term 'transcendent'. The idea of a completely transcendent God is antithethical to the "personal" God which the Christian religion requires. Numinous feelings seem to testify to the presence of "something" that cannot be dismissed. Yet it is extremely difficult to reconcile the transcendence of God with the Fatherhood of God. Anthropomorphic language only tends to aggravate the dichotomy. But religion demands "Fatherhood", which philosophically is inconsistent with the concept of the transcendent God.

One major problem appears to be the difficulty of translating ineffable mystery into the language of our own experience. It would seem also that the frequent paradoxes inherent in the concept of transcendence are symptomatic of man's ambivalence in his religious experience. The concept of transcendence is man's attempt to unify his emotions and his rational aspirations with an independent, externally hidden "Mysterium Tremendum".

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PROBLEM	1
Introduction	1
Evolving Concepts of Transcendence	1
Allied Concepts	3
II. IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSCENDENCE FOR THEOLOGY	10
Transcendence and Creation	12
Transcendence and Holiness	15
Transcendence and Worship	20
Man's Freedom and Progress	26
The Problem of Evil	28
Transcendence and Revelation	35
Summary	41
III. THE PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSCENDENT DEITY	46
Religious Language	47
The Limits of Experience	50
The Attributes of a Transcendent Deity	54
Evidence for Belief in Transcendence	57
Relation of Man to God	60
Summary	63
IV. PURVIEW	64
V. BIBLIOGRAPHY	70

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, philosophical discussions have focussed on attempts to elucidate problems by examining thoroughly the terms used to designate ideas. Phrases which are used by ordinary men in ordinary discourse are explored by philosophers, who question these expressions and ask what they "really" mean. This type of analysis has been of the greatest value in the theological field, where, over the years, many terms have been used with generalized rather than specific meaning. It must be conceded, however, that there are many words in use that either can not be exactly and clearly defined, or have so many "meanings" that ambiguity easily results. It is not the purpose of philosophy to usurp the functions of etymology or lexicography, and to define exactly and unambiguously every word or phrase used, but the clarification of the concepts which a word suggests, is essential if we are to examine accepted ideas and beliefs. This thesis will attempt to elucidate the theological and philosophical uses of one such word: 'transcendence' in so far as it is applicable to the concept of deity.

EVOLVING CONCEPTS OF TRANSCENDENCE

The term 'transcendent' has been used in many and varied senses, almost all of which have antithetical reference in some way to experience or the empirical order. There would be little point in collating philo-

logically all the passages in which theologians speak of transcendence, in order to "distill" a clear-cut concept. The word itself is derived from the Latin "transcendere", which has been translated "to raise oneself beyond", in which the implication is that of self-transcendence, a word much used in existentialist thought, as well as by modern theologians. Another translation of the Latin word refers to the crossing or climbing over some obstacle, a use which has been extended to the "experience" gained by human beings of things which they are unable to express in words.

While The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1) lists no other theological meaning than "exalted above and distinct from the universe", connotations of the word suggest other applications. One could say of any whole that it excels or surpasses its parts; it transcends them even if it is not apart from them. To absorb or encompass something is surely to transcend it in some legitimate sense of the term. This theological way of using the word is obviously much "weaker" than that which involves the stronger concept of attempting to surmount an insuperable obstacle.

In philosophy the word 'transcendence' implies that which is beyond the possible limits of experience and hence human knowledge, but not, of course, beyond the imagination or beyond thought. In theology the word refers to "something" above and independent of the universe, in other words, something separate from and beyond the universe. In scholastic times, the doctrine of Divine Transcendence was opposed to that of Divine Immanence, possibly because the latter was regarded in a pantheis-

(1) The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 3rd Ed. revised, 1956)

tic sense. For example, the writings of Johannes Scotus Erigena were condemned for their pantheistic tendencies. For medieval philosophers, the concept of transcendence was of fundamental importance and though some were accused of eliminating the distinction between God and the world, and so were guilty of pantheistic ideas, they nevertheless recognized the distinction between the mind of God and the finite mind of creaturely man. Thus from early times, the many paradoxical ideas involved in the concept of transcendence have been the subject of debate.

ALLIED CONCEPTS.

Before embarking on the theological and philosophical implications of transcendence, it is necessary to consider certain allied concepts.

Pantheism is that system of philosophy which identifies God with the total universe. The formula introduced by Toland, who coined the term in 1705, suggested that all things in the world are one, where the word "all things" are equated with God. It is often difficult to ascertain whether a given system is pantheistic or not. Two main forms of pantheism can be distinguished from among various related doctrines.

Monism asserts that the universe is one single whole of closely interconnected parts, with nothing beyond it. From this, the denial of a transcendent Deity and of creation follows. A second form argues that the whole is either itself divine, and hence a proper object of worship or that it contains a divine indwelling principle. The latter appears to contain a paradoxical element in that while being pantheistic, it seems to be also dualistic. Doubt has been expressed whether systems such as Neoplatonism, in which the world is regarded as an emanation of God, or

one, such as Hegelianism, which embraces a kind of absolute idealism and allows the development of an Absolute, are pantheistic. These systems are now considered panentheistic rather than pantheistic.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church defines panentheism as

the belief that the being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part of it exists in Him, but (as against pantheism) that the Being is more than, and is not exhausted by, the universe. (2)

Panentheism, as a mean between extremes, denies that God is totally separate from the universe (Deism), or absolutely identical with it (pantheism). However, contrary to Christian orthodoxy (Theism), it asserts that God is with, but not before Creation. Deism, panentheism, and pantheism are all species of theism, and it may be wondered why they appear so contrary to theism, used in the Christian sense. Theism, in all its forms, in the literal sense of the term, means "belief in God" and nothing more. The various species elaborate on the plain statement. Deism and theism derive from the same ultimate root, the one via the Greek way, the other via the Latin route. Theism, however, in the orthodox sense, must be regarded as a special case of theism, as other religions may be theistic without the connotations attached by Christian theology.

Deism was the term applied to a trend in theological thought, which appeared chiefly, but not exclusively in England, and was most conspicuous in the eighteenth century. It was the theological effect of historical causes, especially those which emphasized individual liberty and toleration. After the Reformation, deism was the form of the revolt

(2) The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957).

against orthodox authoritarianism and scholasticism. Empirical criteria, due to the rise and growth of physical science, following the impact of Copernicus, gave a method of testing the reliability of knowledge, and of "truth" using natural reason. This deistic movement asserted the advantages of natural religion over revealed religion, and attempted to ascertain the relation of the Christian doctrine to theology, in the light of reason alone. Deists postulated a transcendent God, a Creator, who, having completed His task, left the natural reason of man to explore His wonderful works, and to cope with any problems which might arise from man's own existence. Clarke, who was thorough-going Christian theist, distinguished four classes of deists. (1) Those who "pretend to believe the existence of one eternal, infinite, intelligent Being; and ... teach that the Supreme Being made the world; though at the same time ... they fancy that God does not at all concern Himself in the government of the world, nor has any regard to, or care of, what is done therein; (2) those who also admit divine providence in nature; (3) those who, further, have some notion of the moral perfection of God; and (4) those who, in addition, acknowledge man's duties to God, and see the need for a future state of rewards and punishments - but all this "only so far 'tis discoverable by the light of Nature". (3)

The first class asserted that God was simply an external Creator, who made the world, set it under certain laws, and then left it alone. This was the essential principle of deism. But other qualities were added. To God was attributed sufficient intelligence and power to undertake the task. He was further credited with moral attributes, and when the world's course is run, He will pass final judgment and distribute rewards and punishments. He stands to the rest of the universe as one part to

(3) S. Clarke, Discourses concerning the Being and Attributes of God (9th edition, 1738) pp. 159ff, quoted by W.R. Sorley, Moral Values and the Idea of God, (Cambridge University Press, 1918) p. 458.

another; a unique part, certainly, for He brought the other part into existence, and hence had some control over it, which, however, He does not exercise. The deist's God was completely apart, wholly other, beyond, transcendent.

Deism laid so great a stress on the otherness, on the transcendence of the Divine that it removed God out of the world altogether, and set Him at a distance alike from nature's laws and from the thoughts of mankind. The God of the deists, standing before reason as a cold, omnipotent automaton, may be contrasted with the comforting beneficent Deity whose continuing concern for the present and future welfare of His creatures, gave much needed peace of mind. Ward sums up the difference, placing theism between the extremes of pantheism and deism.

For Pantheism, God is the immanent ground of the world, for deism He is the transcendent ground, for theism He is both. (4)

Thus for both theism and deism the common ground is a transcendent God, the Creator from whom all things, whether of seemingly long endurance or the most transitory life, have all received their existence and being. The fundamental characteristic of creatureliness is dependence. Creatures are, therefore, contingent and transient. By contingent is meant that the existence of finite creatures is dependent entirely on external causes and factors which aid in their production, but finally on God's will. Since it is dependent on external causes, on factors beyond itself, which may at any time operate, being may be cast into non-being. Only He who

(4) J. Ward, The Realm of Ends p. 234. (Quoted by Alexander in "Theism and Pantheism", The Hibbert Journal Vol. 25, (1926) p. 254.

is the source of all being, can transcend threats of insecurity and helplessness which affect the contingent and transient creatures.

Though Christian theism and deism both accept a transcendent Deity, the connotations of the word 'transcendent' differ to some extent. The transcendent God, in the deistic sense, was excluded from this world and so was contrasted with the ever-present God, who, though transcendent to the creation, is still vitally concerned with the welfare of His creatures.

If then transcendent is defined in the deistic sense of absolutely and utterly apart from His creatures, with no concern for, and never interfering with their earthly ways, He is indeed the far-off, absentee type of deity, wholly other to man, dwelling in majesty and glory. Thus if man is imprisoned within the confines of human contingency, and if his acts and forms of thought are bounded by this limited experience, it follows that the word 'transcendent' would have application to a deity who in His complete apartness would have little attraction for the adherents of the Christian religion. It will be shown that certain aspects of our existence are better explained to human satisfaction if we consider the deity as transcendent in the strong sense of that term. However, it will be necessary to postulate a weaker sense of the term 'transcendent', which rejects the deists' assertion of unconcernedness, and which, through one of the strands of holiness, permits communication. It will be conceded, for example, that any type of revelation would not be consistent with an unconcerned God, but as Christians believe that revelation has occurred, then concern is a necessary trait of the transcendent Deity. Thus it seems that the essential distinction between the weak and the strong

senses of the concept of transcendence rests on whether He is or is not concerned with His creation.

But our forms of thought are not bounded by our limited experience, and hence we are able to attach to the transcendent Deity certain attributes which are required by the Christian tradition. Various qualities of the Deity, such as unknowable, without apparent concern for His creation, non-interfering in the laws or progress of nature, independent and perhaps self-sufficient, may be investigated to ascertain how far these concepts are compatible with both a transcendent Deity and the Christian scheme. All these terms have meaning, though perhaps incapable of any precise definition. That is, they have a use. It is not intended to define these terms, especially in view of the fact that literal denotations often ensure that progress cannot be made. For example, if unknowable is defined rigidly as that which cannot be known, further discussion is not feasible.

There are two sorts of person who will not let go without a definition: the wise man and the fool. The difference between them is that the latter demands one at the beginning of an investigation, while the former is content to wait until the end. (5)

There are few subjects to which this epigrammatic wisdom may be applied more perfectly than the one under discussion.

It should be noted that in this thesis, whatever the concept of God means to man, whatever value or use it may have for man, it is postulated that there is a referent, a "Something", whose existence is asserted. It is also postulated that the concept of God refers to a

(5) C.E. Bennett, A Philosophical Study of Mysticism, (Yale University Press, 1923) pp. 6, 7.

"Something", supremely holy, who is worthy of both praise and adoration, and unconditional obedience.

It is intended to explore the relevance and use of the concept of a transcendent Deity and to examine the problems and enigmas inherent in the application of this idea to the various problems of the Christian religion and to philosophical theology. Certain other postulates in the Christian religion for example, survival of death, may be considered to ascertain how far these are consistent with the concept of a transcendent Deity.

CHAPTER II.

IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSCENDENCE FOR THEOLOGY

It has been remarked that the supreme privileges and duty of the Christian community are the adoration and service of God in Christ our Lord, and that the "true history of the Church is therefore the history of its worship". (1) The study of the love of God and its necessary correlate, the love of humanity, for God's sake, the worship and adoration of the Deity, are of greater importance to the layman than the ability to expound and defend the subtleties of his faith. However, it must be conceded that there is a pressing duty for some to interpret, especially to philosophers and intellectuals, the rationality or inspiration associated with its various tenets. The layman does not desire that intellectual propositions shall take precedence over the trust and obedience of love; he gains major satisfaction from carrying out the practical side of his beliefs.

What Englishmen chiefly want is a clear recognition that the spiritual is also the practical -- that it belongs no more to the temple than to the counting-house, or the workshop. (2)

At the same time, Christianity, says T.S. Eliot, must be treated with a great deal more intellectual respect than is customary; that it must be treated as a "matter primarily of thought and not of feeling". (3)

(1) Canon Roger Lloyd, The Church of England in the 20th Century Vol. I, 1946, p. 162, (Quoted from Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England 1690-1850, (Princeton University Press, 1961) p. 7.

(2) F.D. Maurice, The Prayer Book and the Lord's Prayer, 1880, p. 12. (Quoted from Davies, op. cit., p. 305).

(3) T.S. Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1940) p. 8.

Clarity and justifiability of thought should be our principal guide in any philosophy of religion. It is found that a major source of confusion in dealing with the problems appertaining to the concept of Deity has been the failure on the part of some writers to distinguish clearly the fundamental differences between empirical knowledge, religious faith, and metaphysical speculation. Often the three have been hopelessly intertwined; sometimes statements of faith have been construed as statements of fact, and tentative theories have been surreptitiously recorded as if proof were obvious. The context in theological, and for that matter, in philosophical, writings does not always render clear which aspect of meaning is being discussed. God is an "object" of religious faith; He may be required as a hypothesis of metaphysical speculation, but, as yet, He is not an "object" of empirical knowledge. The assertion by Christian theists of the immanence of God does not alter this fact. Theists have never claimed that God's immanence means that we now have a datum of analyzable verifiable experience, but rather that we still have just a declaration of religious faith, part of a whole faith in God which includes the concepts of both transcendence and immanence.

The word 'transcendent' when used in a theological sense, seems to convey a blurred, general notion which is not understood except by the use of vague terms such as 'beyond', 'before', 'not a part of' the ordinary world. It is obvious that the terms 'beyond', 'above' are spatial, while terms like 'before' are temporal. But neither spatiality nor temporality are attributes of the transcendent. Lewis suggests that the term be reserved for a peculiar 'beyondness' or 'otherness' of God implied in the perfection and absolute completeness of His 'nature' which

distinguishes Him from His created beings.

There are three co-ordinate sources of ordinary knowledge; reason, experience and revelation. Reason discloses relations among ideas and so shows what conclusions follow from premisses already accepted. Experience, including perception and introspection, discloses the existence of those processes which we actually observe. Revelation, at the minimum, teaches the existence of a substantial deity which is the reality of the world and the substantial self which is the reality of the individual. Any given individual may be poorly endowed with any one faculty. However, none of these methods are infallible. Experience has its illusions, reason its fallacies, and faith its heresies.

To obtain knowledge of God requires the use of all three faculties. Revelation, at one and the same time, gives information about the deity as well as assisting our belief. Reason appears to demand that those human attributes which man regards most highly, should not only be essential traits in the Deity, but should attain perfection therein. Some, then, of God's attributes are given by revelation and some by reason.

TRANSCENDENCE AND CREATION

The classical proofs of the existence of God were attempts to demonstrate that there is a "real" counterpart to the preconceived idea of Deity. The development of this idea has been evolved through successive stages of religious meditation. Alternatively, such a concept was constructed by speculative philosophy, and from voluntary human interpretation.

Some, for example, Toynbee, Jaspers and Aldous Huxley, proponents of the so-called perennial philosophy, seek to sift from the tenets of rival religions, a store of common beliefs through which men may unite practically and which may enable them, even while adhering to the cultural heritage of their various faiths, to regard each other with sympathy and toleration. It has been suggested that all the higher religions speak with one voice. As Aldous Huxley indicates,

Man's final end, the purpose of his existence, is to love, know and be united with the immanent and transcendent Godhead. And this identification of self with spiritual non-self can be achieved only by "dying to" selfness and living to spirit. (4)

The purpose of man's existence is deemed to be that of loving and knowing the transcendent and immanent God, so that, in the end, he will be united with Him. Before seeking the purpose of his existence, man asks a prior question. He would like to know the origin of both the world and himself. The Christian answer to this question postulates a divine Creator, a Deity who is different from all other creators in that His creation, the universe, was made out of nothing. The affirmation of creation is the first item in Christian creeds, and it is this assertion by believers which points to a transcendent God. Lewis writes

He is the Creator, Himself uncreated, the Lord God before whom we bow in worship which it would be blasphemous to render to any other, blasphemous and a violation of our own nature. The sole object of genuine worship is a transcendent God. (5)

(4) A. Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, (London, Chatto and Windus, 1946) p. 48. (Cf. K. Jaspers, The Perennial Scope of Philosophy (New York 1949) and A. Toynbee, A Historian's Approach to Religion (London, 1956).

(5) H.D. Lewis, Our Experience of God, (London, Allen and Unwin, 1959) p. 65.

Thus there is nothing in all creation worthy of man's worship, since there is nothing that is not finite and transitory. The Christian concept of God is far removed from that of the Platonic artificer-demiurge and impresses upon us the vast difference between the transcendent God and His creation. The creation, then, draws the ultimate distinction between the transcendent God and His dependent creatures; the former, the "object" worthy of worship, the latter worships. Creation in its traditional religious sense refers to the bringing forth of something out of nothing, an operation which finite creatures can never experience or understand fully. Frank emphasizes this.

For if we assume that the world and man have been created by God, neither the world nor man can be independent in their existence, but must be relative, contingent, accidental; in other words, they cannot have their origin and meaning in themselves. The relation between the world and a God who is not of it but different from it is conceivable only as a relation between creature and Creator. (6)

The idea of creation appears to imply two corollaries: (1) God is the sole transcendent, unconditioned ground or source of all existence; and (2) creatures are dependent, and yet real, not apparent. In the first case we are affirming a strictly monistic account of origins, as opposed to any sort of dualism; and yet, in the second case, we affirm a dualism of Creator and creature that denies any identity between the two. This is the basic thesis of transcendence. As Brunner has remarked,

Creation out of nothing is the expression of the unconditioned, sovereign Lordship of God, of His absolute transcendence, and of His absolute mystery. (7)

(6) E. Frank, Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth, (Oxford University Press, 1945) p. 58.

(7) E. Brunner, Revelation and Reason (New York, Westminster Press, 1946) pp. 44-45.

A difference of opinion exists concerning the necessity of creation to God. The proponents of Divine Immanence hold that the world is as necessary to God, as God to the world, while a transcendent God does not require a world to add to His perfection or satisfaction. It is, however, difficult to conceive of a Creator, who, after having created a world, shows no further interest in it, though to the Deists this presented no difficulty. One then can conceive of His having a relation with His creatures, and in practice, the apprehension of a supreme Being in personal terms has occurred since the beginnings of religion. For, although God is transcendent and thus beyond experience, He is to some extent within it in the sense that all that we know about Him comes from within our finite experience and in particular from the occurrences which we believe to be peculiarly religious. Thus our real problem is not how to get outside experience but how to discriminate within it.

TRANSCENDENCE AND HOLINESS.

It would seem relevant to inquire into the relation between transcendence and holiness. It has been suggested that the concept of transcendence really arises from the apartness or the "distance" of God from the finite creation. God is God alone, different in form from every other form, and different in essence from every other existent. The difference is that between the Creator and the creature, and so God is apart, and wholly other.

The holiness of God is intimately connected with the transcendence of God, for both concepts have as their basis, the apartness of God. Early in the creeds the transcendence of God as "Maker of heaven and

"earth" is emphasized, and likewise, the words "Hallowed be Thy Name" emphasize the holiness of God. One of the concerns of the Christian Church is to "hallow" and reverence the Holy Name, and to keep it from becoming sullied. The Old Testament, in its later sections, records the revelation of the Holy God.

It is generally agreed that the fundamental act of religion is the worship of the Holy One. Otto (8) has shown impressively that the Holy is that to which the religious act is directed. Holiness is the very nature of the numinous, which characterizes the divine, the "Mysterium Tremendum" to whom man, as a religious being, turns. Originally the word 'holiness' had no ethical connotation, but stressed the apartness of God, distinguishing Him from all other. Hence He is really "wholly other", a "position" which can be held only by the Creator of the world. Only He is different from all other existents, containing no kind of creatureli-ness, and hence we designate to Him divinity on account of His holiness. Holiness is not a quality which God possesses in common with other beings, not even in degree; but, on the contrary, it distinguishes Him clearly and distinctly from everything else.

Because of His holiness, God wills that He is the only God, the "jealous" God, who guards the relation between Himself as Creator, and the world, as created. In His relation to the world, we can distinguish in the concept of holiness, two apparently contradictory stresses, one which may be termed withdrawal and exclusion, and the other inclusion. The former emphasizes that God is the only God, the Holy One of Israel, who

(8) R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy (New York, Oxford University Press 1923).

dwells in "light unapproachable" (9), and is "apart" in every way from His creatures. So completely is this so, that His holiness and hiddenness require reverent homage on bended knee which not only debases His creatures but serves to enhance the majesty of the Holy One. It would appear that it is this subdivision of holiness, the exclusion or withdrawal segment, which bears an extremely intimate relation to the concept of the transcendence of God.

The other subdivision, the inclusion principle, points to the revelation of the Holy God for "the whole earth is filled with His glory". (10) He desires that His name shall be known and recognized, and that men may, in special circumstances, after many washings and purifications, draw near in humble spirit to this communion and communication which is inclusive of all those who truly call on Him. In sincere reverence, we may sense the numinous, the positive nearness of God. This segment of holiness is that to which the petitioning worshipper appeals, and to whom the Holy God responds, thus making possible that communication which the Christian religion requires of a Holy and transcendent God.

In Isaiah, God's holiness included His mysteriousness, His hiddenness, His transcendence and His ethical nature. A transcendent being who is not holy could not be a deity worthy of worship. While a transcendent deity might be worthy of praise, only a Holy God is worthy of complete devotion and trust commanding the creatures' fullest powers of adoration and reverence.

(9) 1 Timothy 6. 16.

(10) Psalm 72. 19.

The word 'holy' is, however, used in a weaker sense, and applied to humans, which refers to the setting apart and dedication of a creature to God's service, but this sense is not in any degree like that to which we refer when we speak of the holiness of God.

Holiness embraces the whole of God, for it is this holiness of the great "Mysterium Tremendum" which characterizes the one mysterious supremely great and adorable reality. To say that God is not holy would bring in grave doubt the whole Christian scheme. The holiness of God, as does the creation by God, emphasizes the great disparity between God and creature. The holiness and sacredness of God prevent the close approach of worshippers. The whole of the world, in which we observe the glory of God, serves to act as a veil, shielding the mystery from us. From ancient times the concept of veiling the Deity has served to enhance and induce this inscrutability. It will be conceded that inscrutability is not incompatible with either God's unconcernedness for His creatures or His unknowableness by them. Neither is it incompatible with His concern for His people and the world. If the inscrutable refers to that which cannot be searched into or found out by searching, that is, impenetrable or unfathomable, or is entirely mysterious, it would appear that unknowability which means "without knowledge of" or that which cannot be known by human skills, is entirely compatible with inscrutable. Yet we may obtain "knowledge" of the unknowable and inscrutable God should He choose to reveal Himself. Even though He may reveal Himself we may still remain insensible to the revelation or to the workings of the Creator. It would be self-contradictory to believe in and yet withhold or deny praise and worship to a holy God. The notion of holiness entails that of

transcendence as Cyril of Alexandria perceived when he wrote:

What products of builders and masons and mechanical craft could be holy? Are not they better thinkers who regard the sky and the firmament, and the whole universe and the totality of things as a worthy manifestation of God's transcendence? (11)

Fear of the divine involves awe and admiration, as well as an attitude of humility, which is partly expressed as the recognition of one's sinfulness. The holiness of God is reflected in the unholiness of the worshipper. Thus the creature aims at purification, attempting to increase his likeness to the divine. The Judaic religion, in particular, recognizes the possibility of such a step by the doctrine that man is made in the image of God, but adherents to religions derived from the Judaic scheme never believe that they can become holy, as indicated by their keeping their distance from the "object" of their worship. The idea that the divine lies 'beyond' phenomena arises out of the requirements of worship, which is the particular way in which human beings express their reactions to Him who is 'beyond'.

The concept of the holiness of the Creator serves to enhance the sublimity of God if He is exalted above His creatures by being conceived as not identifiable with any aspect of the physical world, and independent for His existence or power on the world, though the world is dependent on Him. His exaltedness is further enhanced if the world is a declaration, albeit an attenuated one, of His glory. Thus He is worthy of limitless praise.

If in addition it is asserted that man is debased due to his own contumacy to such an extent that God of His graciousness comes voluntarily

(11) Cyril of Alexandria, Stromateis 7, 5.

to man's aid, at the greatest possible sacrifice to Himself, and continues to offer His love to His unworthy creatures, then He is amply worthy of unconditional obedience, service and obeisance.

The qualities inherent in the concept of the transcendent must have some impact on the relation between God and man. It is proposed to examine the consequences of the concepts for worship, progress, freedom and evil, and their compatibility with the notions of revelation and incarnation.

TRANSCENDENCE AND WORSHIP

A requirement of worship is its regular practice, so that it seldom merely becomes a single spontaneous expression of feeling. Worship requires awe, sacrifice and sincerity, and this latter should increase with the recognition of obedience due to God and with one's understanding of Him. Worship involves much greater intensity than, e.g. hero-worship because the Divine is so much more impressive and magnificent than the beauty and wonder of nature, for do not the latter declare but part of the glory of the former? Worship should affect our attitudes to life, by directing us through "the fear of the Lord" to the sublime mysteries of and 'beyond' the world. This will have the effect of uniting the Christian society under a common code of moral rules, though it would be wrong to think that the point of religious doctrines is the inculcation of good behavior.

Possibly the most important component of worship is praise and adoration directed to God, and not merely at God. The worshipper is obliged owing to language deficiencies to offer his praise in personal

language. In most ceremonies, God is addressed in familiar form using the second person singular, but simultaneously the worshipper abases himself, indicative of the acknowledgement of the transcendence of God. However, on occasions, the familiar direct invocation of God is considered presumptuous, in which case the third person singular is used.

The belief that worship and prayer are addressed to God directly, implies that the Divine can, in some sense, "hear" the worship expressed, and also that He is likewise sentient. The addressing of God in the second person singular just noted, also implies that God is personal, and can be contacted, met, or encountered. It is in such God-talk that anthropomorphism arises, and causes much confusion in our efforts to think clearly about Him. For example, following the sacred writings, God has been thought of as "walking in the garden about the breezy part of the day", or speaking directly resulting in the use of the phrase "Thus saith the Lord".

It is certain that the God to whom worship is accorded must be, in some sense of the term, personal. One cannot envisage human beings continuing to offer praise to an omnipotent It, a mere Force. If religion is to continue, and this for some is debatable, then it is essential not only to posit God, but to accept a personal God. Bertrand Russell and Father Copleston could agree that the concept 'God' is taken by Christians to stand for a "supreme personal being - distinct from the world and Creator of the world". (12) Whatever difficulties this description of God leads us into, the extract quoted is equivalent to a personal transcendent God. It does not appear inconsistent to say that God is transcen-

(12) B. Russell. Why I am not a Christian (London, Allen and Unwin 1957) p. 144.

dent, i.e. beyond experience, and yet personal, which infers that we may possibly have relationship with Him. Petitions to God require a Deity who is able to enter into an I-Thou relationship, one who thus would be addressed in personal terms, and one who is thought of in anthropomorphic expressions. We see then that the two components of worship require both a transcendent God and an immanent Deity. If the transcendent God is postulated to have no concern for His creatures, it is difficult to argue that to supplicate God in worship can produce any kind of result.

The Christian religion presents some very definite beliefs concerning the value of prayer. It affirms that God can be thought of in personal terms. He is asserted to be a God of love and grace, that He is active in the world, that His presence may be felt, that we can communicate with Him, in fine, that we may pray to Him and expect our prayers to be considered. This strand of the Christian religion seems to be an utterly different one from that which we may refer to as the transcendent strand.

The practice of prayer is an essential ingredient of most religions, and it is central to the Christian religion. If we define prayer as communion with God, then the term would appear to have greater applicability to a personal God than to the Deists' God. But many would be disposed to equate prayer with worship; though it is necessary to distinguish between devotional practices with or without the appropriate conduct. Though right conduct is a necessary adjunct of prayer, as such it does not constitute religion, for religion is not ethics. It is further necessary to distinguish the two strands of worship: the praise and adoration strand from the petitional. The former would be quite in keeping with a

transcendent God, though prayers in this case would be highly formal.

The latter requires a personal God to whom prayers for both petitioning and propitiating could be offered, but prayers emptied of the content of sincere faith would have little efficacy.

What importance or interest for us has a transcendent God, a "something we know not what", when its mysteriousness is bound to remain impenetrable? If we maintained nothing further, we would seem to have more in common with an agnostic than with the adherent to the Christian religion.

The contemplation of God does not, by any means, exhaust that which is owed to God by the creature. Religion contains within itself that many sided living relationship with a personal being, a relationship which is maintained throughout life and which is reflected in the ritual performed, when, by disciplined meditation, there is a response from man to God's initiative. The symbols of worship, material things, e.g. bread and wine of the sacrament of holy communion, are reminders of the active personal God, with whom, from time to time, and in appropriate places and at various times, we are enveloped with that something, described inadequately by the term "numinous". This feeling is indicative of that "Something" which takes the creature to Himself and replenishes him with the courage and fortitude to face life here on earth.

If we regard worship of the supremely holy Being as involving the two constituents of adoration and limitless praise on the one hand, and supplication and sacrifice on the other, it will be readily conceded that the former is that aspect of worship which is rightly due to the transcendent Deity, provided that the word 'transcendence' is defined in that

weaker sense which implies that the Deity is able to hear and accept the praise that was being offered. Otherwise the worshippers would merely be rejoicing for those good things which the Maker of heaven and earth had implanted in the earth for their use and comfort. The petitioning of a transcendent God, if He is regarded as "beyond" the universe, and having no apparent concern for His creatures, as implied by the Deists, would obviously be ineffective and futile. This sort of static antithesis of creature and God, this tension without action, must point to a dynamic relationship of a genuinely dialectical type. The tension now is changed and becomes that between the human achievement which attempts a harmony of creaturely servitude and spiritual freedom on the one hand, and the continuing transcendence of God on the other. This dialectical tension between human effort and achievement and divine transcendence may be postulated to a core of spiritual experience. (13)

The tension is resolved in one sense if we accept that history was fulfilled in the revelation of God in Christ, and yet remains eternally incomplete as we look for the final fulfillment by the returning God. But in practice, the equilibrium can only be maintained between the free will of man by justification through works, and the hope of Divine aid by justification through grace. But this necessitates not only a transcendent Deity in the guise of an all holy and powerful God, but one with whom a person to person relationship may be established.

The two concepts of worship appear to require a transcendence and

(13) R. Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York Scribners 1941) Vol. II, Ch. iv (cf. Vol. I, Chs. 7-9).

an immanence in the unity of God, and Edwin Morris writes, "the Church has always combined belief in God's transcendence with belief in His immanence". (14) But are these two ideas contradictory or complementary? It will readily be appreciated that this is dependent on the way the terms are defined. If we return to the deist's conception of a transcendent God, it would be plausible to state that worship, possibly the most important ramification of the Christian religion, if directed solely to a transcendent God of this type, would soon deteriorate into adulation instead of adoration.

There is also a danger of idolatry when worship is directed to a non-personal transcendent God. An "outward and visible sign", if an object and taken to represent God, has a solidarity and independence which readily attracts to itself the glory which belongs to the Reality. The characteristics of this Reality are completely outside our finite experience. The "beyondness" of sensible things to which Bakewell (15) referred, cannot be identified with the "beyondness" of a transcendent Being. The worshipper must resist, when according Him praise, the insidious focussing of his worship on tangible realities.

An apparent contradiction may be enlightening. In our quest for knowledge, we find ourselves confronted with a multitude of unrelated contradictions and sigh for a system in which all paradoxes are resolved. In fact, we should appreciate a reduction of the many to a few, if not to

(14) E. Morris, Archbishop of Wales, (Quoted in The Observer of London, March 24, 1963) p. 11.

(15) C.M. Bakewell, "The Problem of Transcendence", Philosophical Review, Vol. 20 (1911) p. 119.

a single one. The paradox of transcendent (beyond the limits of experience) and immanent (indwelling) is insoluble, and requires for its resolution, belief and faith. But it does not seem to be paradoxical for a transcendent to have a person to person relation with His creatures. He may remain hidden, i.e. beyond our experience, and yet have relationship with us. But this is very different from indwelling. It might be mentioned here that Kierkegaard (supporting the notion of transcendence) was vigorously opposed to Hegel's assertion of the immanent logos.

Thus it might be suggested that the concept of a transcendent God, with concern for, and in communication with His creatures is compatible with the two strands of worship and does not necessitate an indwelling Deity.

MAN'S FREEDOM AND PROGRESS

During the period of the Christian era, a number of examples could be found which indicate that the Church has shown opposition to progress and the evolution of thought. Man may have felt psychologically restrained, hindered, and impeded in all that he has tried to accomplish, for it has always been the contention of religion that man is ever in the presence of the Deity. He overlooks continuously all man's limited efforts, good or bad, progressive or retrogressive. Nietzsche resented the presence of a Deity who continually watched him, rather than, as the Church recorded, watched over him. He saw in the Deity one who meddled in man's progress. How can man give of his best while an immanent God, through His omniscience, "plagues" the worshippers by His omnipresence. Nietzsche's reasons are so cogent that the death of God, that is, a

ubiquitous God, became a necessary condition for man's peace of mind.

He had to die: he looked with eyes which beheld everything -- He beheld man's depths and dregs, all his hidden ignominy and ugliness. His pity knew no modesty: he crept into my dirtiest corners. This most prying, over-intrusive, over-pitiful one had to die. He ever beheld me: on such a witness I would have revenge -- or not live myself.

The God who beheld everything, and also man: that God had to die! Man cannot endure that such a witness should live. (16)

It will be readily recognized that the notion of an "eternal" God, and His death by Nietzsche's pen is a contradiction in terms. But Nietzsche required the withdrawal of the immanence of God, so that man could proceed with his growing-up and not remain for ever in a state of pre-adolescence. God's complete withdrawal from the world would allow man to accept his own responsibilities, to move on towards his own destiny, and to delineate his own progress. Thus man, freed from external supervision, must accept full liability for all his thoughts and actions, be they good or evil. The arrogance of man now appears primary, as when Protagoras, the most noted of the Sophists, said, "Man is the measure of all things".

By the killing of God Nietzsche hoped to extirpate the consciousness of God from the minds of modern Christians. Beliefs and norms would be robbed of their former foundations, dominated by Christian dogmas, and sinister idolatries, such as the worship of the state, could take the place of religion. If there is no divine guidance available, and no hope of resuscitating a dead faith, man must consider what resources he can muster from within himself. Man can only rely on himself and must shape the course and hence the meaning of his own life. He will have to use the

(16) F. Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathrusta (New York, Modern Library, 1939)
Part IV, Chapter 67, pp. 264-267.

freedom thrust upon him by the death of God to choose his own destiny.

Freedom, then, due to the absence of God, is thrust upon man.

But freedom entails responsibility, and the acquisition of this new found freedom, which before was only partial, demands that man should become urgently aware of his responsibility and face the choices which lie open before him, and choose.

Choice is a very important aspect of existentialist thought. Existentialists seem to have met the challenge evoked by the crisis of religion in two ways: those who remain Christian rely on a neo-biblical re-interpretation, while others, atheistically inclined, seek secular replacements for Christianity. The former seek the truth of religion, which neither rational argument nor the existence of the Church could any longer sustain, in subjective faith. The latter, Sartre among them, set themselves grimly to the task of giving dignity and meaning to man's life without God.

It can thus be accepted that the freedom and responsibility of man is completely compatible with the transcendence of God. In fact, even the most controversial facet of this concept, His apparent apathy or unconcern for His creatures and His world, could be construed as being directly connected with the unhindered progress of man, according to the views of certain branches of existentialist thought. The ubiquity of God is, following Nietzsche, definitely detrimental.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

The acceptance of the compatibility of freedom and responsibility with the concept of transcendence in the Deity, inevitably raises the

question of the prevalence of evil in the world. As the amount of goodness and purposefulness in the world appears, to the believer, incompatible with the non-existence of God, so the amount of evil and purposelessness seems incompatible with the existence of God. The problem of evil has caused considerable difficulty to theologians, who accept the "fact" that the creation, as God "saw" it, and as recorded, was good. If this belief concerning creation is accepted, then evil entered the world after the creation, and, further, if God the Creator was vitally concerned with His work, then, either He could not prevent it, in which case He is weak, or did not wish to prevent it in which case He is wicked or at least not good. It cannot be conceived that God is not good, but it is possible to conceive that God is not concerned or interested. It is possible that God could have made man in such a way that he always "chose" the right. But this He did not do. Man, as we have seen, has responsibility and this he must assume if he is not to be either a mere automaton or a marionette manipulated by strings from "above".

It might be proposed that the freedom and responsibility of man has been a contributive cause, perhaps the whole cause, of the evil in the world. If this be granted, it might be contended that man, by careful investigation and experimentation, should be able to eliminate this, and "return" the world to its original good state.

This confronts us with the need to assess the measure of man's powers. It is possible to discuss this if we limit the review to the biological, social and intellectual aspects of man. From a biological point of view, he is an organism with animal needs and appetites. Through increasing knowledge and experimentation, he is able to satisfy such needs

and appetites, and, in fact, through the recognition of health conditions, has been able in the last century to increase the life span of the average man. External conditions over which the individual has little control or his own freedom of choice may affect health conditions adversely. The elimination of disease and physical suffering is one of man's major goals towards which he is striving through enlightened rationalism and through ever increasing physiological and scientific knowledge.

In his capacity as a social animal, he attempts to make his choice in society towards the greatest individual and collective happiness. Justice is a sense of human friendship, a belonging to the community. But in his freedom of choice, man has often chosen unwisely, with the result that fear, dread, alienation and all the other social evils are almost overwhelming us. Evil, here, seems to follow from wrong choice.

In his capacity as an intelligent animal, man is always reaching out to know. He seeks to know by experience, both conceptually or intellectually, aesthetically and morally. It is always the aim of every institution of human society to provide and encourage the richest possible experience in order that we may be able to use our freedom in the wisest way. In the prehistoric past, before man became aware of his possibilities, or as Breasted aptly says, before the dawn of conscience, and in fact ever since, prejudiced or bigoted choices have brought much misfortune and disaster to the world. On the other hand, we receive much guidance from the great intellectual, moral and aesthetic achievements of more recent times, when man began to accept and recognize his responsibilities.

It is, of course, not possible even to conjecture whether the

strength of good in the world is increasing relative to the strength of evil, but it can be said that the potentiality for reducing the amount of suffering in the world seems to be greater than ever before. However, it must be conceded that any unwise choice, not only by an individual, but by leaders and representatives could in minutes, undo the work of years.

Perhaps it might be suggested that the conditions which make 'good' possible, are also the very conditions which make evil and suffering possible. There appear to be two main conditions which assist in the extension of the good: the free development of the individual person, and the social relationships with beings who are likewise free. But freedom involves choice, and the choice made may result in either good or evil. For example, if unanimity characterizes social interaction, then joy, contentment and "the peace which passeth all understanding" seems attainable: but if dissidence and discord prevail, distress and suffering follow in their wake. However, it must be granted that neither an individual unilaterally, nor individuals collectively can decide or elect harmony without jeopardizing the personal free will of each human being. It is this conflict of 'personal' and 'collective' which is so difficult of solution.

Any belief in creation, and indeed any belief in the reality of freedom, if God is not the unconcerned One of the Deists, seem clearly to necessitate some limitation of the omnipotence and perhaps the omniscience of the transcendent God. At the same time, Christians cannot admit that any portion of existence is absolutely independent of God. To meet the dilemma, the notion of divine "self-limitation" has been posited. We

cannot know what are the conditions of such self-limitation, neither can its application be clearly articulated. But the conception itself is required by the facts as they appear in religious and moral experience. To present some semblance of a solution to the problem of evil, it has been suggested that either we conclude that God is not wholly good or that He is not wholly powerful. If we are faced with choosing one of these alternatives, almost any sensitive mind would choose the latter hypothesis. To believe that there is a limit to God's goodness would be to deny utterly the notion of God as our ultimate principle of explanation. Of course, if the transcendent God has the attributes the Deists apply to Him, then His complete indifference and unconcernedness would permit the complete independence of man.

In his essay "God and the Absolute" Bradley (17) declares that the assessor of an imperfect God is, whether he knows it or not, face to face with a desparate task or a forlorn alternative. He must try to show (how I cannot tell) that the entire rest of the universe, outside his limited God, is known to be still weaker and more limited. Or he must appear to us to follow our Leader blindly, and, for all we know, to a common and overwhelming defeat.

Tennant (18) has attempted to deal with the problem of God's limitation. His work is a quasi-empirical investigation, and he warns that this type of exploration of the nature of God does not permit us to give that term the meaning it has in traditional thought. God the Creator implies the world, and it is in this act of creation that His first limitation occurs. However, God is still considered to be perfect, not

(17) F.H. Bradley, Essays on Truth and Reality (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1914) p. 430.

(18) F.R. Tennant, Philosophical Theology (Cambridge University Press, 1935) Vol. II, Chapter VI.

in an ontological sense, but in an ethical sense. God is absolute only in the sense that He is the self-subsistent and uncaused ground of existence. God's purpose, for Tennant, includes the realization of man's moral personality, and to this end He gives His creatures the freedom requisite for moral autonomy and therefore limits His own knowledge and power. His perfect goodness remains intact. If we, as creatures, misuse our freedom, and follow evil ways, this need not lead to conclusions that God's purpose will ultimately be frustrated. Tennant asserts that there is inherent in goodness that which promotes its own self-preservation, and something in evil which promises self-destruction.

The Creator God is transcendent; that is, the world is His utterance, an utterance separate from God. It has been planted out with a devolved autonomy, which is other than, but derived from, God's creativity. Its independence is, however, relative and limited, otherwise chaos would have resulted. In virtue of its delegated independence, the cosmos is assumed to be purpose-realizing, though counterbalanced by a God who is concerned. (19) Thus God creates a world in which He gives some measure of freedom and independence, the primary importance of which is in the moral realm where man is free to choose good or otherwise. Thus God limits Himself. And He thus must continue to respect and safeguard human freedom as a basis of moral personality.

Man has real freedom and independence, and is left to work out his own realization. In this one realm, the most important one for man's future progress, man is independent of God, and co-ordinate with Him. It

(19) Tennant, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 212.

would appear that it may be possible for man to defeat God's purpose. It is at this point Tennant has to postulate the thesis that there is something inherent in goodness which prevents the frustration of God's purpose. This, however, seems to suggest that, after all, man's freedom is but an illusion.

Tennant's attempt to simplify the problem of a limited God by confining it to one field, i.e. the ethical field, does not appear to meet with complete success. His arguments have a strong flavor of deism, a tendency which Tennant himself admits. (20)

God, especially if He be considered to be the unconcerned One, cannot be thought of acting unilaterally to bring about any conformity or in any way influencing the wills of individuals. So man is left to do his work with the mental equipment provided. If the conditions for good are the conditions for evil, whatever pragmatic experimentation is tried in the alleviation of suffering, one can only conclude that free will and choice are interlocked with the conditions leading to good and evil. Neither good nor evil can be eliminated.

Both the problem of freedom and of evil would be mitigated if the transcendent God could be equated to the Deists' God. He would be unconcerned about His creation and His creatures, in which case man would be indeed helpless against what appears to be the irresistible force of evil. So prevalent is evil that man has felt the need throughout the ages to beseech and implore the Deity to assist him in his continuous and seemingly unequal struggle. This attitude is completely incompatible with any

(20) Tennant, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 224 f.

assertion of an unconcerned God. But it has been made abundantly clear, particularly in His revelation to man, that He is not unconcerned.

TRANSCENDENCE AND REVELATION

To the worshipper of a transcendent God, the concept of revelation presents an interesting problem. This appears to be similar to that raised relative to worship, in that one characteristic involves the apparent negation of other traits.

It is clear that a transcendent God without concern would not trouble Himself with His creatures and any revelation would be incompatible with one of His attributes. But on the other hand, it is only a transcendent God, as the hidden God, who could consider revelation, and who would want to acquaint His worshippers with "knowledge" about His unknowable Self. The resultant dilemma appears insoluble.

The term 'revelation' is often used in a very general sense, without any precise meaning being attached to it. Revelation literally means uncovering, the lifting of an obscuring veil, so as to disclose something that was formerly hidden. To disclose means to uncover, and not discover, for one discovers something for oneself, but one uncovers it to another. In the former case, the subject is primarily active, in the latter, primarily passive. Thus God "uncovers" Himself to man.

It is necessary to distinguish the theological use of 'revelation' from its general epistemological use. In theology, revelation has place only within the relationship of person to person. It is not the revelation of an object to a subject, but the revelation of subject to subject, a revelation from mind to mind. This distinguishes the theological use

from the epistemological use in which all valid knowledge, all apprehended truth may be regarded as revealed. But there is no valid knowledge except of what is already there, either waiting or striving to be known. The mind is active in attending, seeking, selecting and interpreting, but in doing this, it also plays a passive role in its reception of the data.

The deists comprehended 'revelation' in the epistemological sense. All theists, including deists, agree that the world, man and his natural faculties are an utterance of God, which, as interpreted from the finite standpoint, constitute a revelation of the existence and to some extent (by analogy) of the attributes of the Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God" remind us that man is able to "know" the invisible, hidden God, through His handiwork. This world which is God's utterance and which depends for its nature on God's nature and will is entirely the work of a transcendent Deity. The nature of God cannot be derived from worldly characteristics. Thus it is possible for deists to regard the utterance as revelation, at the same time denying what is commonly spoken of as "revealed" religion. This revelation, as the deists regard it, is intrinsic and internal to the created universe as a rational and moral universe. Thus the deists confused the theological meaning of the word 'revelation' with its epistemological use.

The interpretation of the 'deistic' revelation must be regarded as a gradual unfolding, progressing step by step as man improved his natural faculties. Conceived then as the gradual acquisition of religious knowledge due to man's own efforts, one may compare this increase with the expanding vista or landscape obtained on climbing a mountain. By the surveillance of the area in view one may the better interpret that obtained

from lower down the mountain. God has given us the whole, which man gradually discovers and reveals. There is no need then to invoke inspiration from an immanent God, in order to account for man's progressive discovery of the nature of God, any more than inspiration from an immanent God is needed to explain man's acquisition of natural knowledge.

The revelation which concerns us here is the theological aspect in which the divine Subject, the hidden God, reveals Himself to the human subject. Yet two further connotations of the word 'revelation' must be noticed: it refers to the process of communication, and to the product, that is, it refers not only to the encounters between God and man, but to a body of teaching that emerges.

Kant ... made no use of the concept of revelation. The faith he labored to defend was very far from being the acceptance of an authoritatively communicated truth, and this was the only meaning of the word with which tradition supplied him. (21)

It is interesting to note that in the Judeo-Christian tradition the content of revelation is sought in the Scriptures. These are interpreted for Jews by Rabbinic tradition and authoritatively expounded for Catholicism by the Church, while for Non-conformism, especially, their meaning is unravelled by the enlightened conscience of the individual believer. But the idea that the Divine Revelation was given once and for all, and that the written records need only to be consulted when guidance is sought, encounters several formidable obstacles. Man, possessing a sense of history, recognizes growth and development as characteristics of life, and the dynamic view stands in contrast to the static concept of revelation thought of as mere immutable proclamation. The proclamation contains

(21) J. Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York, Columbia University Press 1956) p. 11.

tradition which modern man is unable to accept.

Thus revelation has become a word of many facets. It is a process of Divine communication, interpreted by fallible human beings, who, it must be conceded, possessed great insight. It is also a body of teaching possessing permanent validity. Yet revelation is not primarily a communication of supranatural knowledge; it is not a stimulation of numinous feelings. It can, of course, give rise to knowledge, and is necessarily accompanied by numinous feelings. It is essentially the action of a transcendent God, a Being at once so perfectly holy that He remains hidden, except when He offers Himself in fellowship, unveiling His essential hiddenness. While we may recognize the content of scripture as the response of human witnesses to divine events, not as a miraculously divine dictation, nevertheless in the strictest sense, revelation makes us conscious of the Living God Himself. In the language of Buber (22) God, or the eternal Thou, is never known as It, because He is not known in the Subject-Object relation of knowledge and experience, but only in the I-Thou of existential encounter.

The revelation of God, through His incarnate Son, is of the greatest importance to the Christian religion. The anthropomorphic language used in this connection adds further to the confusion in the understanding of what is being meant. However, our first problem would be to consider what are the outward signs which would lead us to accept a person who regards Himself as the incarnate "Son" of God.

The God-man must be holy, as holiness appears to be a necessary

(22) M. Buber, I and Thou, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 2nd Edition, 1958) (original translation 1937)

condition for divinity. Other relevant attributes seem to be the ability to work miracles, the purity and great power of His character, as well as a mysteriousness which is strangely numinous. He must be held in the highest esteem. The God-man must of necessity possess spiritual insight and holiness of character to a pre-eminent degree, so that confusion between the saints of God and the "Son" of God should not arise.

The gap which separates God from man is primarily identified as that separating the Holy from the sinful. It is necessary then that the God-man shall not only be sinless, but that He shall through His holiness, have the power to save others. The power to save means the power to relieve to some extent, man of his unholiness and his inadequacy. The gap between worshipper and worshipped is thereby decreased, and communication with God is made easier. It is clear, however, that the only one with this power to save is the Divine whose holiness is peerless. If then the sinless sacrifice of Christ on the Cross has that power, it would indicate that He was truly the God-man.

Even so, difficulties are ever present. In His sojourn in the world of human beings it is perplexing to understand how He retained His identity with the worshipped while He was a worshipper Himself. However, it is conceded that though His sanctity would have contributed to His identity with God, He rejected the use of the power and majesty which He undoubtedly possessed, and during His abode in this world assumed human frailties. The great contrast between worshipper and worshipped precludes the worshipper from being the object of worship. Yet Christ, the better to appreciate the relationship of God to man, undertook worship. The dilemma of the identification of worshipped and worshipper raises a

difficulty of criteria for incarnation.

It was suggested that God Himself replaced what is termed the human soul, and thus God was in Christ functioning through the human body. This supposition would account for the supernatural experiences attributed to Christ, but would not account for those which were distinctively human in character. The vast difference between the "order" of the soul of man and the "order" of the Godhead led to further difficulty.

Another suggestion viewed the human body as containing two natures, one human and one divine, God functioning as a kind of additional subject. This hypothesis, though conceivable, affords no explication of the normality and coherence of the life and mind of the historical Christ.

The hypothesis that God was in a unique degree "immanent" in Christ, acting inspirationally on the person of Christ, suggests the non-divine nature of the Messiah. But incarnation does not mean inspiration by an immanent God. It signifies quite precisely the coming of God to His dependent creatures, either as wholly God, or at least as partially God, and not merely God exerting a unique influence on a person belonging solely to the class of human beings. Immanence may be a substitute for incarnation, it cannot be one among other interpretations of incarnation.

If the world was created by God, who then left it to its own devices, and felt no further concern for it, as contended by the Deists, it is difficult to see what point there would be in visiting His creatures in their earthly habitat. Yet even they were prepared to accept the "fact" that God could, if He so desired, interfere in the affairs of man. They did not consider God indifferent in the absolute sense. Could not God sweep away in a moment, the world He had originally created? The

scriptures record that, on one occasion, most of the inhabitants were "liquidated", and Noah was in charge of the new beginning. His sign in the sky is said to be the guarantee that this will not re-occur, however misguided the occupants of the earth become, through their wrong choices in the exercise of freedom.

It would seem, then, that incarnation is essentially the prerogative of a transcendent God whose desire is that human beings shall not be left without some knowledge of the "unknowable". Locke however, reminded us that the "knowledge" given in revelation is less probable than that afforded by reason, as the former required the added ingredient of faith and belief.

SUMMARY

The concept of the transcendent God has been applied to some of the threads which contribute to the warp and woof of the Christian way of life. It must be recognized that in dissecting a doctrinal scheme, it is impossible to do it full justice, for the intertwining of the threads is essential to the pattern. Once a thread has been drawn, the pattern is broken, and its re-insertion is never completely satisfactory. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to do this in an attempt to seek identifications just as it is legitimate in other circumstances to attempt to classify.

One of the confusions of the Christian scheme is the paramount demand that worship be offered to both a personal and impersonal God. It must be conceded that religion would not be religion without worship, and particularly with that close relationship to God which worshippers demand.

The concept of worship contains two apparently inconsistent strands. One of these requires that the Deity worshipped be worthy in the sense that He is transcendent, that is beyond experience, and separated from the universe which He has created out of nothing. This God must be perfectly holy, veiled or hidden, and apart from His sinful finite creatures. This vast difference in holiness has the illusion of removing man from the orbit of the Divine. Worship with its accepted form of conduct, its proper attitude of abasement, offers to the transcendent God the praise and adoration which it is "meet and right" that He should receive. Yet man cannot continue to give, and receive nothing. He requires of His Deity that He is able to come to his aid, to help him through this life, so that he may attain the glory of the life hereafter. The oppressive forces of the world, the evil in the world creates for man an intolerable situation from which, using his own powers, he is unable to extricate himself. His transcendent Deity is hence required to be more than an impersonal God. Communications must be established through the other strand of worship in order to buttress man's seemingly weak powers against the evils of this world. God, while remaining the hidden God, retaining all His majesty and glory, has shown by His revelation that He is concerned about His creatures. This encourages man to attempt to regain contact. This encounter with God requires that God be, to some extent, for man, a personal God, and yet at the same time, He must remain an "object" of awe and reverence. The person to person relationship demands an intensity of belief, self negation, and obeisance on the part of the worshipper. He enters, very humbly, God's presence in that spiritual environment which enhances, rather than decreases the majesty of God.

The personal relationship between humans is vastly different from this.

It is suggested, then, that, as evidenced by His revelation, God is concerned with His creatures, and thus a personal God, understood in numinous terms, is not incompatible with a transcendent God.

The use of anthropomorphic language is perhaps helpful in worship to assist the worshipper to understand and approach the Deity. But its use has often brought confusion into religious thinking. The expression "Son of God" is particularly confusing, and hence it might be suggested that the use of such language be reduced to a minimum.

The independence of a transcendent God of His creation does not eliminate His concern for it. Independence may be compatible with unconcern or concern. His unknowability, also unconnected with concern and unconcern, is connected with the sacredness and apartness, and the veiling of the transcendent, as illustrated by the Jews in the Temple. Should God remain unknowable for ever, humans would find it necessary to embroider the concept of God with certain human qualities, which the Godhead would exemplify to a unique degree.

Reviewing the various threads, it will be noticed that the progress of man, closely connected with his freedom and free-will, requires, or is compatible with, the concept of a purely transcendent God, One who has freely given to man the freedom of the will as a great gift, which, having been freely given, He is not prepared to interfere unless petitioned to do so. Freedom implies responsibility, though responsibility suggests responsibility for something, and this something for which one is held responsible, appears to be covered by the blanket term of evil. If God is independent of His creation, the actual presence of evil in the world

would be in no way incompatible with a supremely holy God.

The belief in the divinity of the One incarnated Christ, presupposes belief in the existence of a transcendent God, "dwelling" in "another world". And yet revelation either by sacred writings or by incarnation requires that the transcendent God be not the unconcerned one. And this raises the insoluble problem. The differentiation of the incarnate "Son" of God, and of the prophets and saints, who have also shown the quality of "holiness", seems surely to be a matter of degree. The evidence in support of the claim that Christ was God is historical, and yet it is not free from the prejudices which beset the early Church. Historical evidence alone cannot establish divinity. However, whether or not Christ was God incarnate, or just another man, albeit unique, is not a matter which confronts us here.

One seems to return to the "fact" that the worship which is due to the God of the Christian religion, creates for us the supreme difficulty. It is worth while reviewing what we have said on this question. To be an adequate object of worship, the object must be holy, but at the same time unobvious, not "open" to exploration. Only a transcendent "sort" of God may be worshipped, veiled from human eyes by His own creation. This concept appears unsatisfying to the worshipper. The definition of religion usually involves the recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power, controlling his destiny, entitled to obedience, reverence and worship. Superficially the concepts of a transcendent God discussed in this chapter would satisfy the conditions of such a definition, provided that the phrase "control of his destiny" is interpreted as God's jurisdiction over man's ultimate goal which in Christian terms refers to the kingdom

of heaven. But it is in this life that man desires to establish closer relations with His deity. The I-Thou relationship expounded by Buber (23) would seem to meet the needs of the worshipper. The establishment of such a relationship requires an intensity of belief, and a self-abnegation on the part of the worshipper. The use of anthropomorphic terms aids the worshipper in establishing a personal relation with the Godhead. Such a relationship, however, mitigates the concept of transcendence.

The comfort and support of a personal relationship with God appears to be necessary for the majority of men. Though the concept of a wholly transcendent God would appear logically sound, such a concept ignores the emotional element and thus could never wholly satisfy the needs of man. Thus it would seem that the price of logical consistency is too high and Christians are unwilling to forsake the personal relationship with God. Discussion of this relationship invariably involves the use of anthropomorphic terms which confound the ideas and give rise to innumerable perplexities. If the Christian worshipper demands that the object of His worship should have the qualities of transcendence, it will be necessary for him to accept some paradoxes, but these add to the mystery and glory of the incomprehensible.

(23) M. Buber, op. cit.

CHAPTER III.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSCENDENT DEITY

The predominant characteristic of medieval thought in philosophy was that much of its perspective began with God. From the time of Descartes the theocentric approach was abandoned, and the self became the indisputable starting point for philosophical reflection. However, the problem of the nature and existence of the self has remained persistent to the present time.

The thinking and doubting by a real existent supposes questioning, asserting, answering. Thus thinking and doubting always imply a question; if an assertion is made, a question of its truth arises. Thinking as questioning is a mode of our existence. We require clear answers to our questions, but these answers must not falsify the self which asks. Dogmatism, then, is the very negation of our existence, for our understanding is "blocked" by the "certainties" which are authoritatively provided. Our existence is threatened when our questioning is silenced. When thinking ceases to have the form of questioning, it becomes sterile, or dogmatic, possibly superstitious. To be is to ask.

Man may try to be objective, and ask three fundamental questions, concerning the world, existence and himself. The word "world" has a number of connotations; it is often confused with "environment". Everything has an environment, but man alone of all existing things has a world. Man is always in his environment, but he can stand in thought outside the world and question it. Hume and Kant both saw that the world can be discovered empirically and studied scientifically. The

world is a dimension of existence. Man questions, probes, and seeks as he stands over against the world. It is only that part of the world which is environment that can be studied scientifically. Science, then, will help in discovering part of the world, part of the answer of "why". If we proceed further and ask, 'Why the why', we are asking as 'knowing or seeking' selves why anything should exist rather than nothing, and so are in the realm of metaphysics. But in standing apart from myself as an inexplicable unique self, with the responsibility for living my own life, and for dying my own death, the ultimate question becomes, what is the meaning of my existence. For Christian theists this can only be answered by his recognition of, and belief in, the divine Creator, the Transcendent God.

Religious belief in the present century is particularly difficult because of the prevailing necessity to subject everything to the test of reason. This climate of opinion has been created by modern philosophical thought. However, there are still those who have that kind of faith and trust which are unable to justify themselves at the bar of intellect alone.

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

The meaningfulness of religious words has, of late, been occupying the attention of philosophers. It is not intended here to discuss the statement "God exists", or to attempt a detailed consideration of such statements as "God loves us" or "God is good". In such cases the theologian tries to solve his problems in two ways. He "alters" the "facts" either by calling an experience illusory, or by alleging facts which are

not observed, when, for example, he postulates some "secret" sins to account for human suffering. On the other hand, he changes the meanings of "religious" words, so that the word "love" in the assertion "God loves us" does not have the same meaning as it has in ordinary usage. Thus the theologian tries to make a mutual accommodation of words and empirical facts; sometimes the one, sometimes the other must give way. But this means that, taken cumulatively, assertions of, say, God's goodness cannot be falsified. A more serious charge is that such assertions are unfalsifiable. Nothing which can be mentioned as an observed fact is inconsistent with God's goodness, and nothing could count against. Job's assertion "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him", bears out the fact that nothing whatsoever could falsify religious statements. It would seem that the price to be paid for unfalsifiability is meaninglessness. Many religious words do not conform to the meaning criteria, as do other words.

Attempts have also been made to ascribe emotive meaning to religious words. Religious sentences are then neither true nor false; religious words are meaningful by way of expressing and stimulating such attitudes as fear, anxiety, hope, confidence. Anxiety is "ontic" in human life, i.e. of its essence. If this be accepted, it would seem no "healing" can remove it. Only the dead are not anxious. While there is life there is anxiety. This hypothesis of pessimism requires that something shall relieve this apparently hopeless state. Prayer, for instance, expresses contrition along with a resolution to do better; it expresses trustfulness and resolve. Prayer is always two-fold: there is an object of adoration and the effort to achieve an attitude of adoration by the individual who prays. This activates the individual's self-regenerative

potential, and anxiety is assuaged. Here, however, religion involves no asserting or denying of propositions, but only feelings and the will, and the showing of resolve in conduct. Prayer and worship of this type should require the belief in a transcendent object worthy of worship, and an immanent God capable of assuaging the continuous anxiety.

Emotion may play an active part in religious belief, but it can never supersede thought. Religion always demands belief: belief in and belief that. The latter is the affirmation by the believer of a statement belonging to some kind of knowledge even though the belief is not acceptable by the rules of justification. A belief in is the affirmation of an object rather than a statement: e.g. we believe in democracy because we believe that it is the best means of realizing certain goals. Faith, then, may be defined as a set of beliefs "in". Faith in God means a belief in God which involves the affirmation that He exists, that He has a certain nature, and a relation to man and the universe.

The controversy concerning religion has been carried on in terms of the methods used by Wittgenstein and members of the school of analysis. What has been discussed is religious language, how it is used, and how it can be meaningful. The critics have taken for granted two principles, the analytic-synthetic distinction which has recently been called into question, and some modification of the verification principle. Many recent essays have attempted to clarify this problem of religious thought. (1) It will, however, be necessary, in our discussion of the statement "God is transcendent", to decide if such a concept is acceptable,

(1) For example, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, ed. Anthony Flew and Alastair McIntyre (London, S.C.M. Press, 1955)

philosophically, and if so, to ascertain what meaning may be attached to it.

To assert that "God is transcendent" is to assert that He is beyond the world and that He is outside His creation. But it is these small words "beyond", "outside" which cause the trouble from the logical point of view. We realize well enough, that the world is not a box or a sphere which has boundaries. But it is this use of 'beyond' which prompts us to think of some limited object, which has an "outside". It is at this point that we wonder if these words have meaning. We also realize that in the first century, the world was thought of as a limited object, and the "heavens" could be designated as "up" or "beyond". "The landlord (God) could be considered as living in a far-off country and only very occasionally visiting His vineyard". For this period, a perfectly satisfactory meaning was available. The use of such words today can only be apprehended in a symbolic manner.

THE LIMITS OF EXPERIENCE

The concept of transcendence has been assumed to refer to that which is beyond the limits of possible experience, and hence the transcendent Deity would be "something" beyond our experiential limit. If the term "finite life" means that we are unable to comprehend the transcendent in any form, whether of thought or experience, then, because we are unable to form any sort of idea of it, the word "transcendent" would have a limited meaning, and no connotation other than beyond experience would be possible. If we accept this, then any "test" to validate the existence of "something" transcendent would be impossible. It has been

aptly stated that we could not know what it is, and we could not prove or otherwise demonstrate that it is.

It is necessary to explore the meaning of experience to ascertain the limits of the phrase "beyond experience". From the classical viewpoint, experience was a concept which, in part, was aimed at bringing what was regarded as "abstract" ideas to some sort of decisive test. Experience became identified with such characteristics as immediate sense-data, and the domain of sensible objects. The attempt to interpret the whole of human experience using classical characteristics soon made it evident that there could be no room for even a transcendent God within experience, that is, as a matter of experience, if the empirical viewpoint were strictly interpreted and rigidly followed. The main point was that experience was identified with the domain of sensible objects, and in no way, could the supreme object of worship or of religion be found within this domain. Since God could never be understood as an object, but only as a center of purposes, the classical empiricism furnishes another reason why God was forced beyond the limits of experience.

Kant saw the problem clearly, and his theory of the Ideas was an acknowledgement of the reality of certain regions of experience which must be forced beyond or outside "experience" understood in the classical sense. God was the chief among the realities expressed in the Ideas. In making God into the Ideal of Pure Reason, Kant underlined the truth that, from the classical conception of experience, God is not a matter of experience, but, if known at all, must be known in some other way. Hegel continued the broadening of the concept of experience, pointing out shortcomings in the former conception.

In its own field this empirical knowledge may at first give satisfaction; but in two ways it is seen to come short. In the first place there is another circle of objects which it does not embrace. These are Freedom, Spirit, and God. They belong to a different sphere, not because it can be said that they have nothing to do with experience; for though they are certainly not experiences of the senses, it is quite an identical proposition to say that whatever is in consciousness is experienced. The real ground for assigning them to another field of cognition is that in their scope and content these objects evidently show themselves as infinite. (2)

Thus while religion generally and its basic reality God cannot be based upon experience if understood in the classical sense, Hegel nevertheless, saw that it was not true to say that these realities have nothing to do with experience. Of course it might be contended too, that if religion is so pervasive an aspect of human experience, and if so many claims witness to the experience of God, then a theory of experience which denies to religion experiential status, must be too tightly drawn. Thus if transcendence be defined in that sense which merely makes it an external relation, not only referring to its separation, but its complete aloofness, so immensely beyond as to be out of all contact, outside the range of experience in the classical sense, then it would not be too much to say that the notion of a transcendent Deity can not be philosophically justified. God would become a mere formality. Therefore it is not necessary to linger further on this extreme form of the concept of transcendence.

These postulates about the transcendent Deity would make it extremely difficult to continue to uphold the tenets of the Christian religion, since this sort of absentee God does not meet the religious need or demand. Nor does it meet the philosophers' demand for continuity and some kind of synthesis. Natural theology, that is the study of the

(2) G.W.F. Hegel, Logic in Encyclopedia Section 8. (Wallace translation).

knowledge of God drawn from nature by natural reason, would lose any relevance. The cause and ground of the natural order would be a mere phantom. Man with such limited experience could not recognize or apprehend any revelation by God. Furthermore, metaphysics which is concerned with reality, or the search for reality, could hardly support the statement that though the transcendent God exists, He is not real. Thus, if experience is defined rigidly as interpreted by classical tradition, speculation would seem to be fruitless.

Christian theologians have long asserted that God is transcendent, wholly other, silent, terms which are interpreted to mean that He is outside experience, but further that some kind of "experience" furnishes ideas, and the words used are not meaningless noises.

Some philosophers, however, aver that experience of whatever kind comes to us through the senses. It has been said that if a single sense were lacking a whole science would disappear. It has also been remarked that the organization of the brain limits our knowledge. But either of these seem to suggest the existence of illimitable powers of knowledge beyond our own, unconceived types of reality, "worlds" in which we are standing, as it were, blind. Perhaps it is some such sort of discovering activity of the mind which reaches out to try to get some "experience" of what lies beyond. This type of "experience" may in fact be what has been termed experience of the numinous. Whether there be any knowledge of the transcendent Being seems then to be a problem for the individual, and for those powers and faculties of consciousness in respect to the exercise of which each individual consciousness is unique.

The transcendent God is the unknown God, but this, too, has been

recognized by theologians from early times. Augustine, St. Thomas, and Pascal are agreed on this point.

We know neither the existence nor the nature of God, because He has neither extension nor limit....If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible since, having neither parts nor limits, He has no relation to us. We are therefore incapable of knowing what He is, or whether He is. This being so, who will dare to solve the problem? Not we who have no relation to Him. (3)

In a certain sense, it may be said that God is both unknown and "known" to us. He is known in that we can determine the meaning, perhaps the truth of certain propositions about Him in an experiential-inferential way. But we can never know, in the philosopher's sense of know, anything about Him, for what we say of Him can not represent the being of God in His infinite actuality. What can be discussed are the propositions we make about what we consider to be the characteristics God ought to have in order to be transcendent. These have been outlined in the previous chapter. That God must be holy, is a necessary proposition. That He is unknowable, incomprehensible cannot be gainsaid.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF A TRANSCENDENT DEITY

The truly transcendent God appears to be similar to the Absolute or prime mover of Aristotle's philosophy. This ultimate agent of all change and process, is itself unmoved. That there is only one such original source of movement implies that the Absolute is one and changeless. His activity is characterized as an activity of immobility, accompanied by a thinking of thought. This impressive self-contemplation

(3) Pascal, Pensées, 223 (English trans. by H.F. Stewart, London, Kegan Paul, 1950) p. 117.

implies that he is far removed from interest in or concern for the world of finite things. This does not mean that though some of the attributes of Aristotle's prime mover are similar to those of the transcendent God, that we may equate the one to the other, though this has often been suggested.

The God worthy of worship is that God who in majesty and holiness is completely beyond any possible human attributes. The creation out of nothing demonstrates a God who is transcendent, whose works are incomprehensible. All this remoteness, this unapproachableness is intensified by the attributes which are posited. The hiddenness of God allows philosophers to consider God as something other than a person or personal. To reinforce this, phrases of the type of "Being Itself" have been suggested. This refers to the God who is the source of all being, and though it avoids anthropomorphic language, other difficulties arise. Firstly, it is a phrase of which we can get no idea whatsoever, except perhaps that impersonalness which is required for a transcendent God. Secondly, if "Being Itself" includes all other being, it would seem that we are faced with the logically impossible position of God being both utterly beyond us and at the same time part of us. This dilemma appears to be identical with the Christian paradox of the transcendent-immanent God.

The essence of the transcendent God is His perfect holiness. As the Creator He is conceived of as exalted and so thought of as occupying a very much higher status than other things especially if He is not identifiable with any aspect of His creation, and if His existence and powers are considered independent of all else. Further as everything is

dependent on Him, having brought the world into existence as an act of will, the transcendent God is, then, worthy of limitless praise and unconditional obedience. He becomes "something" which is totally beyond our grasp, unknowable and incomprehensible. To further His exaltation and His remoteness, the creatures view themselves as debased, and also as responsible for this "low" position by their own foolishness. This God freely accepts to "save" men from their dreadful situation, by an act of sacrifice, which again shows mere man that it is his bounden duty to exalt and glorify His maker. And so, before the great Ultimate, whose existence and whose actions we dare not question, we abase ourselves both literally and intellectually. God becomes to man truly transcendent.

But J.N. Findlay (4) has argued that the concept of God as infinite, beyond His creation, is antithetical to the requirements of God as an "individual" which the Christian religion demands. Such a God cannot logically exist. The characteristics which the two strands of Christian thought requires are incompatible ontologically, and it is difficult to envisage how even God could be expected to harmonize these paradoxical human concepts.

The relation between the world and God has been shown by Penelhum (5) to be one of factual dependence and not one of logical dependence. This relation, however, is of a unique type, and no other example of the kind can be produced, for all relations except this are between finite things. What confirmation of this unique relation can be offered?

(4) J.N. Findlay, "Can God's existence be disproved"? New Essays in Philosophical Theology (London, S.C.M. Press 1955)

(5) T. Penelhum, "Divine Necessity", Mind, Vol. 69, (1960) pp. 175-186.

It might be suggested that the numinous which has been considered by writers since Gregory of Nyssa and the Early Fathers to the present time affords some confirmation. The study of Otto is the most comprehensive in recent times. (6) The experience of the numinous is characterized by a "feeling of dependence" and yet at the same time far more than, and something other than, merely a feeling of dependence. Numinous terms suggested are "awe", "haunt", "weird", "eerie", "something uncanny". (7) There is no ordinary causal effect here, but the realm appears to be one in which expression is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible. Yet we may have here subjective confirmation of the "factual" relation between the "two worlds".

EVIDENCE FOR BELIEF IN TRANSCENDENCE

It is often remarked that the transcendent God does not meet the religious needs and demands of the worshippers. There is no assistance or sustenance in such an "remote" idea. The mind of Western civilization has been profoundly influenced by Christian doctrines, which have not always been clear concerning its view of the Deity. However, it may be said that though the transcendent element plays an extremely important part, the doctrine of, for example, the Fatherhood of God is far from any thoroughgoing transcendence. Believers appear to desire to bridge the void which seems to yawn between the Transcendent Deity and the sons of men. God, for the believer, cannot remain aloof, absent, perhaps "dead",

(6) Otto, op. cit.

(7) Otto, op. cit., pp. 9 and 14.

but is required as a living force closely in touch with human concerns. He is required to be Ruler, Guide, and Friend. But this personal relation compels us to include immanence which, besides its difficulty of meaningful language, seems to be incompatible with the externality of transcendence.

Nothing of this can be empirically tested. Religion always includes belief, belief in God. Prayer, a part of the worship due to God, expresses trust, trust in "something" which is capable of assisting or aiding the human being in his plight. If man became convinced that his prayers were addressed to a being who is merely an image of man's thought, he would cease to pray. A child who writes letters to Santa Claus each year, abandons the practice when he learns that there is no Santa Claus. If we lose our belief in an existent Deity, we may lose our religious attitude, but this does not permit us to infer anything about the truth of religion. But it does imply that belief is essential to religion.

It might be conceded that there are occasions on which the I-Thou encounter has been experienced. If such a claim has more than subjective validity, then it would seem proper to enquire about the evidence which would be relevant to the truth of such religious statements. Much has been said and written about the existence of God, the love of God, and the dependence of the world on its Creator. It may not make sense to ask what would count for or against the existence of God, but it would seem reasonable to ask for some evidence that prayers are answered. Were this forthcoming, it would, at the very least, show that God does, in some miraculous way, encounter His creatures.

However, we must be careful not to adopt an attitude in which

disappointment is never disconcerting, and to persist in the claim that whatever happens, we would allow nothing to count against our affirmation. We would be in the position which has been described elsewhere as the notorious "death by a thousand qualifications".

No doubt many cases could be cited in which prayers are either not answered, or no evidence could be produced to decide whether they had been answered or not. It is difficult to decide what sort of evidence could be entertained. Cases where prayers are not answered may be due to a number of factors other than refusal by God to take any action, either because He does not want to, or because He has no way of doing so. The prayer may have asked for something which, if granted, would have been to the detriment of fellow creatures. A prayer may have been made without that faith which is essential, and many other conditions necessary to "right attitude" may be lacking in the petitioner. All these may be responsible for a negative or no answer at all. Even in cases where the petitioner feels certain that some answer has been given, empiricists may be able to suggest alternative solutions. This of course, is possible, and we would agree that the Christian has no obvious evidence to offer that his prayer has been answered, beyond his firm conviction, or his intuition, which may result in a greater confidence and serenity. But this, on the other hand, may be due to a closer relation recently adopted towards his Christian friends. The question of producing evidence satisfactory to a sceptic, of finding an obvious and close correlation between petitions made sincerely and devoutly, and the granting of them, presents an extremely difficult problem. Yet many feel quite subjectively that they themselves are satisfied that God is able to communicate with and

encounter His petitioners.

It will be agreed that ideas which have no explicit rational grounds often take possession of us. They are not to be summarily rejected on that account. It is just our business to find out if they are rationally justifiable or not. There may be good reasons for their acceptance though as yet we do not know them. Though the rational grounds for the postulation of a transcendent God seem to be non-existent, the generally accepted belief cannot be discounted. However at best they can be no more than a datum for us.

RELATION OF MAN TO GOD

In the triad of metaphysical objects, God, the world and man, the world is but lightly regarded. Maybe it is a transitory thing and of relatively slight significance. Yet it is important that the creation of the world by God suggests a close relation of the world to God and God to the world. It is, at least, that on which rational creatures also created by God, have their abode. But the more important relation is that of the Self to God. It is agreed that there is a regular insistence (from the ethical and the psychological angles) on the intrinsic worth and independent status of the human person. In the deepest and closest communion of human intercourse, there is a core of personality which is impenetrable. Self identity is never lost, however close the human contact might be. In the case of the Deity, God is infinitely greater, yet He remains always Other. And so does man: he remains other, however close his communion with God may become.

To abandon this idea would make many experiences, both in our

life, and in the uniqueness, dignity and worth of the personality of the human being, illusory or at best unsatisfactory. This was Nietzsche's difficulty. He hated communion, and yet for Christians there seems to be no union either. The idea of the Greater Self surrounded by innumerable minor selves has a notion of transcendence if the One remains wholly other. Yet He must somehow be thought of as the ground and yet in communion with, and so guiding and supporting these minor finite selves. To view the transcendent God coupled with the integral component of immanence appears to be running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. But effective religion appears to demand this, however paradoxical or contradictory it might be.

In the concept of the transcendent God, many recalcitrant "facts" are brought to light by opponents of transcendence. The human personality and all that is concomitant in the moral experience of mankind, the implications of "freedom" and self-determination and human uniqueness, all these "things" appear to be compatible with transcendence in the Deity. Revelation, however, appears to require both immanence and transcendence while all the Fatherhood of God and its accompanying tenets demand, are intractable. If the latter cannot be surmounted, it has been argued that, in the face of this mystery, philosophy should compromise. However, it is no part of the appointed task of philosophy to compromise. If we cannot reconcile the transcendent God and the immanent God, then there seems no way out but either to have two, or to discard one. We contend that, faced with the difficulty of meaning and immanence which suggests a finite God, or at least a limited God, it might be better to accept the transcendent God and reject the other.

But it would be as foolish to minimize the differences as it would be to exaggerate them. But refractory difficulties abound. Perhaps the greatest of these envisages man, who belongs to the universe, and equally to the ground, the transcendent Deity of the universe, as a troubled and transient phantom, coming from nowhere, and going whither he knows not.

Careful investigation of this problem, however, may illuminate the relation of man to God.

When little things are elaborated with an infinity of pains in order that they may appear in their full beauty and utmost clearness, how ridiculous that we should not think the highest truths worthy of attaining the highest accuracy. (8)

While agreeing with Plato in this remark, it is found that our topic, the highest object of contemplation, is not one which it is at all easy to attain any accuracy.

To make the concept of Deity conform to the tasks required of it in religion today, insistence on the important aspect of immanence is demanded. Theologians have been at pains to contend that the concept of a transcendent Deity is not incompatible with an immanent Deity, but while it would appear that the paradoxical concepts have the capacity of increasing the virility of religion they also heavily strain coherence. The concepts of immanence and transcendence are beyond experience, considered in the classical sense, a point noticed by Plato.

We must say that to what is known, not only its being known is imparted by the Good, but also its being and existence, though the Good itself is far beyond existence in dignity and power. (9)

(8) Plato, The Republic, VI, 504. (Bosanquet's translation)

(9) Ibid., 508

If "knowledge of God" were to imply our knowing the ground of all objects as an object among objects, an existent "beyond", over against other existents, we should agree with Kant that God can not be known. But though we cannot achieve the impossible, because absurd, it does not necessarily follow that we are condemned to complete ignorance. As we come to know a man through his words and deeds, so we may be able to apprehend God as we enlarge our knowledge of His universe.

SUMMARY

While it is doubtful whether what has been said can bring any satisfaction or assent to belief in a transcendent Deity, the concept does not appear to be antagonistic to a religious attitude. But it is relevant to note that the personal God, described in anthropomorphic language resulting in linguistic difficulties and at the same time increasing the number of paradoxes, finds much greater favor in religious circles than the concept of transcendence.

It would appear that it is impossible - to earthly eyes - to reconcile the two "deities" who are required for the full act of worship, the one, as the object of worship, truly transcendent, the other, Father, Guide and Friend.

We cannot but fully agree with Penelhum that

...(they) will have to show that there is no incompatibility between saying that God transcends the whole world of our daily experience, and saying also that He is present in it in ways which vitally concern us. This is a task which looks to me almost impossibly difficult. (10)

(10) T.M. Penelhum, "Fact, Faith and Philosophy" University of Toronto Quarterly Vol. 26, (1956-1957) p. 104.

CHAPTER IV.

PURVIEW

If we consider the relations between the divine world and the natural world, there stand out three possible conceptions. Firstly, there is the dualistic conception which sets God over against the world, and which admits only the realization of a subjective world, in which life is detached from its source or from its core of Being. Secondly, there is the rationalist hypothesis which supposes the mystery of the Divine Being is accessible only to itself, in apposition to an objective reality which considers the natural world as absolute. Thirdly, there is the symbolism which admits the possibility of God acting within the created world, by a transfusion of divine energy, thus binding together and uniting the two worlds, and yet the Being itself remains inexhaustible and mysterious.

Dualism and rationalism separate man from all contact with the divine world, and imprison him in his finite environment. There is no room for any mysterious relations between the two worlds, no possible reception of the divine spirit, no signs of that other world. Man is condemned to subsist alone, and all his purposes and evaluations are subjected only to psychological scrutiny.

The relations between man and God may be conceived then in three corresponding aspects. Firstly, there is the transcendent dualism which subjects the human will to the divine in a purely external relation. The two natures remain divided, mutually estranged, and externally opposed to one another. Secondly, there is a type of immanent-monism which makes

some kind of metaphysical identification of the human and divine and rejects altogether the independent existence of human nature. Man appears to be but a transitory manifestation of the divine life. Thirdly, there is a theandric interpretation, a partaking of both divine and human, an hypothesis which recognizes the independent existence of the two natures, and the reciprocal action of the divine grace and human freedom. Man, "the other divine", may make his free response to the wishes of God.

In Christianity itself, these three conceptions have been found to a greater or lesser degree. But it would seem that the first and third strands predominate, the former revealing its transcendental outlook, and the latter indicating that close connection between the two constituents which meet the needs of man. It is in the third conception that the greatest antinomy for rational thought is presented. Because of this, considerable complications arise in the evaluations of many Christian doctrines. We are always attempting to translate ineffable mystery into the language of our own experience.

Can any investigation be made into the understanding of the relation between God and man? The Scriptures, presenting a carefully hidden transcendent God, also present a psychology of the Divine, and points to an affective and emotional life of God. The relations of God to man are described in terms of a drama of love between the loving Subject and the loved subject, in which not only man, but God Himself is subject to passions and experiences, anger, sorrow and joy. But we must not confuse the God of Abraham with either the God of theology or the God of philosophy.

The transcendent God, in the very strict sense of the term

'transcendent', i.e. that which indicates the dualism of the two realms of Creator and created, and of a God beyond experience, would undoubtedly satisfy rational thought. But this God would dissolve completely in His own realm, and leave man without any religion whatsoever. Some seem to be able to subsist without any religious attitudes, but the void created has to be filled and this is very inadequately accomplished by various expediences. The majority, however, appear to have some kind of indescribable sensations, especially on those occasions when, to use Jaspers' term, the boundary is almost reached. These indescribable sensations may climb to a maximum, when a felt encounter with the divine Presence is thought to be experienced. Is there any evidence that in such a situation we are not deluding ourselves?

For the Christian, God is not in the world. He transcends it utterly, and yet he wishes to be able to speak of Him as acting in the world. To think of Him encroaching upon the world is surely to cease thinking of Him as transcendent or as wholly other. To speak of Him as transcendent and yet immanent is highly impressive and very mysterious, but does nothing to solve the logical problem. But we do not wish to assert that He is transcendent and immanent but that by some means He is transcendent and in appropriate circumstances to have communication, in a very broad sense, with His devout creatures.

The agnostic may wish to rid himself of ambivalences. This is understandable, but what of those incipient mystical or numinous experiences, the "religiously" disturbing sensations which from time to time possess us? These cannot be mapped on the logical chart, but they are nonetheless 'real'. These experiences may be objective or subjective,

insights or emotions. We have in many writings, particularly in the New Testament, those postures and evaluations of the mind which are hidden under words like wonderment, reverence, and feelings which admit of no description.

Talk of transcendence, about, for example, "events in the world depending on a source beyond the world" is both sense and nonsense. To the logician it would make no sense at all, while to the mystic or poet it would have relevance. It would seem that the Christian's belief in the gospels might point a direction in which he could see some sort of evidence. Not that the faithful witness would need any evidence. As the world of the first century was very differently conceived from a twentieth century world, especial care must be adopted in interpreting their ideas into the modern idiom. Further, to suggest that some thing is dependent on God's will or God's act, makes this concept difficult, perhaps incapable of firm meaning or reference. It would be preferable to look at the concept of some one as the activity of God. The idea is inherent in the message of the gospels.

It is beyond reasonable doubt that Jesus is an historical figure, who held certain beliefs and attitudes about and toward the world. Endless debate, without precise result, has focussed on what his personality included, and what exactly were the contents of his belief. But at least we have an historical figure, who drew around him a body of persons who have interpreted for us the impact of his personality on them. The language used by them is that type of pictorial language which speaks of "Son of God", "the clouds of heaven" and so on. But this language does not detract from the factual evidence presented. It is, however, true

to say that Jesus' own personality was centered on the undoubted existence of God, who though transcendent, could be contacted, and whose especial care and concern were literally conveyed by his interpreters, who, for all their confused anthropomorphic language, set down their findings concisely. Jesus himself had no doubt whatsoever about God's purpose and His concern for His creatures, for Jesus accepted the complete sacrifice with the full knowledge that the God upon whom he depended would vindicate his dependence. The power and consistency of Jesus' life depended on his literal acceptance of the fact that communication is possible between the Divine and His creatures. In fact, He actually taught us to emulate the example he had set.

We may either accept or reject this evidence. It is for each to extend this evidence by faith into conviction or repudiate this attestation. We cannot hope to give the logician a clear cut case, but religion is not a wholly logical activity and thus cannot be expected to provide hypotheses and consistent conclusions.

It is exceedingly difficult to attempt to make rational sense of "God sent His Son", or of the infinite acting in the realm of the finite, or the non-temporal acting in time, in fact about an intelligible relation of God to the world. It is of little value to claim that such "things" are authoritatively revealed. This does not give the statements meaning. But the actual writings of the New Testament, though in one sense revealed, are in another the factual interpretation of actual witnesses. The intervention of God, if in fact it does occur, can only be regarded as both mysterious and miraculous.

Experience, "as of transcendence", may be cognitive or non-

cognitive. There is ambivalence; they may be objective or they may be subjective. But it may be postulated that ambivalence runs throughout the whole field of human experience and interpretation, and we are always faced with two or more possible renderings of an ambiguous total pattern. In the case of transcendence there are the sceptical and theistic renderings, but we shall never be sure which to accept until we are able to apprehend for ourselves, all the possible ramifications.

It would appear that in any discussion concerning the transcendent Deity the logical implications are not entirely compatible with the religious ones and vice versa. The concept of transcendence is man's attempt to unify his emotions and his rational aspirations with an independent, externally hidden, *Mysterium Tremendum*.

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